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News Items from the School of Education of the University of Chicago

THE ORGANIZATION OF ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

During the Summer Quarter an unusually large number of elementary-school principals registered for courses in the School of Education. The comment was heard frequently in the classrooms and corridors that these principals were very progressive and wide-awake. Such statements are particularly significant at this time when elementary schools are undergoing a radical reorganization and are in genuine need of capable educational leaders as principals. The opinion which was current in regard to the principals was based on two types of activities which were carried on vigorously by them.

In the first place, the Elementary-Schools Principals' Conferences were carried on with unusual success by the officers and members of the organization. It is the practice of the School of Education to provide opportunity each summer for the organization of conferences by groups of students who have common problems to discuss. During the first week of the Summer Quarter the elementary-school principals organized and planned a program for the first term which included vigorous discussions of the problems which are challenging the attention of progressive principals today. The topics which follow illustrate very well the issues considered: "Scientific Methods of Grading and Promoting Pupils"; "The Use of Classroom Tests in Supervision"; and "The Socialized Recitation." The conferences were well attended and the round-table discussions were very productive.

In the second place, steps were taken during the course of the first term to organize a National Association of Elementary-School Principals. The movement was initiated in a course entitled "The Organization and Supervision of Elementary Schools," which was

attended very largely by elementary-school principals. A list was secured of the students who were members of the National Education Association and who were in favor of a national organization which would have a sectional program at the February meeting of the Department of Superintendence. A petition has already been prepared and forwarded to President Kendall of the Department of Superintendence. If permission to hold a conference is granted, the committee plans to organize a stimulating program along lines which will be of genuine interest to elementary-school principals.

The organization of a National Association of Elementary-School Principals is both timely and significant. There is no national organization at the present time which progressive principals can attend with the assurance that problems in which they are especially interested will be discussed. To a very large extent state organizations have failed to give sufficient emphasis to the work of principals. It is hoped that the organization of a national association will stimulate the organization of similar associations in each state and in smaller sections of the country.

The organization of a national association is but the initial step in the larger program which should be adopted. Relatively few facts have been collected up to this time concerning the work of principals, effective methods of supervision, and types of elementary-school organization. On the other hand, there are many very suggestive experiments under way in practically every city which should be described and the reports published. If such reports were available, principals could adopt many valuable suggestions from them without having to pursue the same experiments themselves. Furthermore, there are many problems, such as the classification of pupils, provisions for individual differences, and the enrichment of the course of study, which are open to careful study and investigation. It is hoped that the National Association of Elementary School Principals, if organized, will take steps immediately to appoint committees to collect materials of value to principals and to carry on numerous investigations of elementary education.